

THE BIBLE FRAUD

What has been passed down in the New Testament is not a true account of the life history of Jesus Christ or the origin of the Christian religion.

Part 1 of 3

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The Bible Fraud

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TWO CONFUSED STORIES IN THE GOSPELS

Jesus Christ has captured the imagination of millions of people around the world for almost 2,000 years. Few people know that he represents something far different, and the following chapters unravel an entirely new story about the circumstances surrounding the birth and emergence of the Christian religion.

In order to cover this ground, it is necessary to consider the New Testament stories from a different perspective. By stripping away their supernatural elements, the earliest Church writings relay a confused skeletal outline of the lives of two separate men. This work unravels those stories and shows how the New Testament came into being and what it really is. Until now, this aspect of the Gospel story has never been fully developed; and by coordinating new information with surviving records, a reconstruction of the probable course of events that resulted in Christianity today is presented.

WHAT WAS THE CHURCH TRYING TO HIDE?

In 1415, the Church of Rome took an extraordinary step to destroy all knowledge of two second-century Jewish books that it said contained "the true name of Jesus Christ". The antipope Benedict XIII firstly singled out for condemnation a secret Latin treatise called *Mar Yesu*, and then issued instructions to destroy all copies of the Book of Elxai. No editions of these writings now publicly exist, but Church archives recorded that they were once in popular circulation and known to the early presbyters. Knowledge of these writings survived from quotations made by Bishop Hippolytus of Rome (176–236) and St Epiphanius of Salamis (315–403), along with references in some early editions of the Talmud of Palestine and of Babylonia. The Rabbinic fraternity once held the destroyed manuscripts with great reverence, for they were comprehensive original records reporting "the life of Rabbi Jesus".

Later, in a similar manner, Pope Alexander VI (1492–1503) ordered all copies of the Talmud destroyed. The Council of the Inquisition required as many Jewish writings as possible to be burned, with the Spanish Grand Inquisitor Tomas de Torquemada (1420–98) responsible for the elimination of 6,000 volumes at Salamanca. In 1550, Cardinal Caraffa, the Inquisitor-General, procured a Bull from the Pope, repealing all previous permission for priests to read the Talmud which he said contained "hostile stories about Jesus Christ". Bursting forth with fury at the head of his minions, he seized every copy he could find in Rome and burned them. Solomon Romano (1554) also burned many thousands of Hebrew scrolls, and in 1559 every Hebrew book in the city of Prague was confiscated. The mass destruction of Jewish books included hundreds of copies of the Old Testament and caused the irretrievable loss of many original handwritten documents. The oldest text of the Old Testament that survived, before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, was said to be the Bodleian Codex (Oxford), which was dated to circa 1100. In an attempt by the Church to remove damaging Rabbinic information about Jesus Christ from the face of the Earth, the Inquisition burned 12,000 volumes of the Talmud. However, many copies survived and today provide opposing traditions about the person called Jesus Christ.

In the mass destruction of Jewish writings, the Church overlooked two particular British documents that also recorded "the true name of Jesus Christ". They survive to this day in the British Museum, and are called the *Chronicles* and the *Myvyeen Manuscript*—treasured ancient documents with a very early origin. Supporting evidence was also found on early first-century gold, silver and bronze coins discovered at the site of an ancient

mint at Camulodunum (Colchester) in Britain. "Thus the testimony of the Briton coins establishes clearly and positively the historicity of the traditional ancient 'Chronicles' as authentic historical records."¹

The evidence is compelling, and additional supporting clues are found on a mysterious headstone in Germany, in Vatican art treasures and in a series of coded sentences in the Shakespearean plays. Further concealed information was left in the form of specially created statues commissioned by a Catholic priest and positioned in a small hilltop church in southern France. Coded ciphers were also secreted into the first English-language printings of the Bible, and a combination of all clues provides interlocking information and presents a new insight into the origin of Christianity.

Secret Ciphers in the New Testament

It was the "wisest fool in Christendom"² who "authorised" the translation and publication of the first Protestant version of the Bible in English. He came to the English throne in 1603 and quickly became unpopular because of "his disgusting personal habits and his unsavoury character".³ He pretended to be a scholar in theology and philosophy, but his learning was shallow and superficial. He wallowed in filth, moral and physical, but was endowed with a share of cunning that his associates called "a kind of crooked wisdom".⁴

For his new edition of the Bible, King James I issued a set of personal "Rules" the translators were to follow and ordered revisions to proceed, although he never contributed a farthing to its cost. Work began early in 1607 and took a committee of 47 men (some records say 54, others say 50) two years and nine months to rewrite the Bible and make it ready for the press. Each man received 30 shillings per week for his contribution.

Upon its completion in 1609, a remarkable event occurred. The translators handed over the reviser's manuscripts of what is now called the King James Bible to the King for his final personal approval. "It was self-evident that James was not competent to check their work and edit it, so he passed the manuscripts on to the greatest genius of all time...Sir Francis Bacon."⁵

Sir Francis Bacon (1561–1626) was a man of many talents, a lawyer, linguist and composer. He mastered every subject he undertook: mathematics, geometry, music, poetry, painting, astronomy, classical drama and poetry, philosophy, history, theology and architecture. He was a man of many aims and purposes, the father of modern science, remodeller of modern law, patron of modern democracy and possibly the reviver of Freemasonry. His life and works are extensively documented and his intellectual accomplishments widely recognised, particularly in academic circles. At the age of sixteen, he was sent to Paris "direct from the Queen's Hand" and there studied Egyptian, Arabian, Indian and Greek philosophy, with particular attention given to the ancient mysteries and their ritual rites. He personally recorded that while in Paris he created a secret cipher system that could be inserted into a document without arousing suspicion.

While living in Europe, Francis Bacon was initiated into the mysterious Order of the Knights Templar and learned a very special secret. Before he returned to London, he travelled through

France, Italy, Germany and Spain, and at the age of twenty he completely devoted himself to the study of law. From his understanding of the secret information he had learned during his initiation into the Knights Templar, he conceived the idea of reactivating various secret societies and in 1580 founded the secret Rosicrucian Literary Society in Gray's Inn. Later in the same year, he founded the Lodge of Free and Accepted or Speculative Masons, also at Gray's Inn.

On 25 June 1607, Sir Francis Bacon was appointed Solicitor-General and Chief Adviser to the Crown. He had presented new ideas to the government for the reformation of the Church and was officially instructed to commence restructuring the Bible. Research in the Records Office of the British Museum revealed that original documents still exist which refer to important proceedings associated with Sir Francis Bacon's involvement with the editing of both the Old and New Testaments. They reveal that he personally selected and paid the revisers of the New Testament,

who completed their task under the instructions of Bacon's long-time friend, Dr Andrews. The first English-language manuscripts of the Bible remained in Bacon's possession for nearly a year. During that time:

*...he hammered the various styles of the translators into the unity, rhythm, and music of Shakespearean prose, wrote the Prefaces and created the whole scheme of the Authorized Version.*⁶

He also encoded secret information into both the Old and New Testaments.

An ancient document recorded that the true history of early Christianity was known to the initiates of the Order of the Knights Templar, having originally been:

*...imparted to Hugh de Payens by the Grand-Pontiff of the Order of the Temple (of the Nazarene sect), one named Theocletes, after which it was learned by some Knights in Palestine.*⁷

Regarding the months of editing work applied to the Bible by Bacon, his biographer, William T. Smedley, confirmed the extent of the editing:

*It will eventually be proved that the whole structure of the Authorised Bible was Francis Bacon's. He was an ardent student not only of the Bible, but also of early manuscripts. St Augustine, St Jerome, and writers of theological works were studied by him with industry.*⁸

At the completion of the editing, Sir Francis Bacon and King James I had a series of meetings to finalise editorial matters associated with the new Bible. It was at this time that King James ordered a "Dedication to the King" to be drawn up and included in the opening pages. He also wanted the phrase "Appointed to be read in the Churches" to appear on the title page. This was an announcement clarifying that King James had personally given the Church [of England] "special command" for this particular version of the Bible to be used in preference to the vast array of Greek and Latin Vulgate Bibles current at the time. His reason was personal, as King James had previously instructed the revisers to "defend the position of the King" in their restructuring of the texts. This was seen as an attempt to distance the Protestant

"It will eventually be proved that the whole structure of the Authorised Bible was Francis Bacon's."

— William T. Smedley

Bible from the Catholic version. The Protestant versions of the Bible are thinner by seven books than the Catholic version and the variant churches have never agreed on a uniform Bible. In their translation of 1 Peter 2:13, the revisers changed the phrase "the emperor, as supreme" to "the king, as supreme". Because King James's Bible was written to support the authority of a king, the later Church often referred to it as the one from "authority", and it later came to be presented as if officially "authorised". In subsequent revisions, the word "authorised" found its way onto the title page and later still came to be printed on the cover, giving King James's new Bible a false sense of authenticity.

The King James Bible is considered by many today to be the "original" Bible and therefore "genuine", and all later revisions simply counterfeits forged by "higher critics". Others think the King James Bible is "authentic" and "authorised" and presents the original words of the authors as translated into English from the "original" Greek text. However, the "original" Greek text was not written until around the mid-fourth century and was a revised edition of writings compiled decades earlier in Aramaic and Hebrew. Those earlier documents no longer exist,⁹ and the Bibles we have today are five linguistic removes from the first Bibles written. What was written in the "original originals" is quite unknown. It is important to remember that the words "authorised" and "original", as applied to the Bible, do not mean "genuine", "authentic" or "true"...

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JUST WHO WERE THE PARENTS OF JESUS CHRIST?

In the opening sentence of a New Testament parable, Jesus stated:

A man of noble birth was on a long journey abroad, to have himself appointed king, and return. (Luke 19:12)

Herein lies part of a profound Gospel truth revealing the substance of historical information that the Church has strived for 2,000 years to conceal. This tale of long-ago misconceptions and mistaken identities must be clarified so that the original story may be seen to rest upon a true and sure foundation. For this purpose, we begin with the examination of Church writings purporting to record the birth of Jesus Christ.

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke state that Jesus Christ was the first-born of Mary and Joseph and that he had four younger brothers and at least two sisters (Mark 6:3). Roman Catholics are obliged to hold the opinion that the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ were the children of Joseph by a former marriage. This conclusion originally stemmed from the Gospel of James (the *Protevangelium*) which refers to the age of Joseph at the birth of Jesus. However, it is clearly recorded that Joseph had sexual relations with Mary after the birth of Jesus. The statement in the Gospel of Matthew that Joseph "knew her not until she had born a son" (Matt. 1:25) eliminated the Church's claim that Mary was a perpetual virgin. From the statements in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, it is clear that the brothers and sisters of Jesus were subsequent children of Mary in the fullest sense.

Joseph returned to Galilee with the intention of marrying Mary. The Gospels according to Matthew and Luke clearly explain that they were "betrothed" before Joseph's departure. This was the

equivalent of being "engaged" in modern-day terminology. However, upon his return some months later, it was plainly apparent that Mary "was with child" (Luke 2:5) and it "could not be hid from Joseph". The Gospel of Matthew elaborated extensively upon the feelings of Joseph when he saw the violated condition of his bride-to-be. He was uneasy, and being unwilling to defame her he privately discussed ending their engagement (Matt. 1:19). From the description in the Gospels, it is clear that Joseph was not the biological father of Mary's child. So, who was?

The Evidence of the Rabbis

The Jewish records of the Rabbis are of extreme importance in determining Gospel origins and the value of the Church presentation of the virgin birth story of Jesus Christ. A common appellation for Jesus in the Talmud is Yeshu'a ben Panthera, an allusion

to the widespread Jewish belief during the earliest centuries of the Christian era that Jesus was the result of an illegitimate union between his mother and a Roman soldier named Tiberius Julius Abdes Panthera.

The Talmud enshrines within its pages Jewish oral law. It is divided into two parts, the Mishna and the Gemara. The first discusses such subjects as festivals and sacred things. The Gemara is basically a commentary on these subjects. When the Talmud was written is not known. Some authorities suggest a date of 150-160, around the same time the Christian

Gospels began to emerge, while others say 450.

The Talmud writers mention Jesus' name 20 times and quite specifically documents that he was born an illegitimate son of a Roman soldier called Panthera, nicknamed "the Panther". Panthera's existence was confirmed by the discovery of a mysterious tombstone at Bingerbrück in Germany. The engraving etched in the headstone reads:

Tiberius Julius Abdes Panthera, an archer, native of Sidon, Phoenicia, who in 9 AD was transferred to service in Rhineland [Germany].¹⁰

This inscription adds fuel to the theory that Jesus was the illegitimate son of Mary and the soldier Panthera. Classical scholar Professor Morton Smith of Columbia University, USA, describes the tombstone as possibly "our only genuine relic of the holy family".¹¹ In many Jewish references, Jesus is often referred to as "ben Panthera", *ben* meaning "son of". However cautious one ought to be in accepting anything about Jesus from Jewish sources, in the matter of Jesus ben Panthera the writers seem more consistent than the men we now call the Church fathers.

Scholars over the centuries have discussed at length why Jesus was so regularly called ben Panthera. Adamantius Origen, an early Christian historian and Church father (185-251), recorded the following verses about Mary from the research records of a highly regarded second-century historian and author named Celsius (c. 178):

Mary was turned out by her husband, a carpenter by profession, after she had been convicted of unfaithfulness. Cut off by her spouse, she gave birth to Jesus, a bastard; that Jesus, on account of his poverty, was hired out to go to Egypt; that while there he acquired certain (magical) powers which Egyptians pride themselves on possessing.¹²

Later, in passage 1:32, Origen supports the Jewish records and confirms that the paramour of the mother of Jesus was a Roman soldier called Panthera, a name he repeats in verse 1:69. Some time during the 17th century, those sentences were erased from the oldest Vatican manuscripts and other codices under Church control.¹³

The traditional Church writings of St Epiphanius, the Bishop of Salamis (315–403), again confirm the ben Panthera story, and his information is of a startling nature. This champion of Christian orthodoxy and saint of Roman Catholicism states:

*Jesus was the son of a certain Julius whose surname was Panthera.*¹⁴

This is an extraordinary declaration, simply recorded in ancient records as accepted Church history. The ben Panthera legend was so widespread that two early stalwarts of the Christian Church inserted the name in the genealogies of Jesus and Mary as a matter of fact. Enlarging on that statement, this passage from the Talmud:

*Rabbi Shiemon ben Azzai has said: I found in Jerusalem a book of genealogies; therein was written that Such-an-one [Jesus] is the bastard son of an adulteress.*¹⁵

"Such-an-one" was one of the well-known substitutes for Jesus in the Talmud, as has been proved and admitted on either side. Shiemon ben Azzai flourished at the end of the first century and beginning of the second. He was one of four famous Rabbis who, according to Talmudic tradition, "entered Paradise". He was a Chassid (the pious Jews of Palestine), most probably an Essene, and remained a celibate and rigid ascetic until his death.

The story of Mary's pregnancy by a Roman soldier also appears in the sacred book of the Moslems, the Koran. It states that "a full-grown man" forced his attentions on Mary, and in her fear of the disgrace that would follow she left the area and bore Jesus in secret. This story was supported in the Gospel of Luke, with the description of the departure of Joseph and Mary from their home prior to the birth. Rape was a common event in Palestine during the Roman occupation, and soldiers were notorious for their treatment of young women. It would be unthinkable for Mary to admit such an event had occurred, for under the Law of Moses a betrothed virgin who had sex with any man during the period of her betrothal was to be stoned to death by the men of the city (Deut. 22:21). Simply put, Mary faced the death penalty unless she could prove her innocence.¹⁶

The Mother's Name

There is another, lesser-known name Jesus was called during those early years, and that is "Yeshu'a ben Stada" (son of Stada). This name is recorded in the records of the Sanhedrin and also in the Talmud.

What can also be found in the Gemara, and has embarrassed Christian authorities for centuries, is this:

*Ben Stada was ben Panthera, Rabbi Chisda said; the husband was Stada, the lover Panthera. Another said the husband was Paphos ben Jehuda; Stada was his mother...and she was unfaithful to her husband.*¹⁷

These apparently contradictory assertions can be ironed out when read in context. In summary, Stada was Yeshu'a (Jesus) ben Panthera's mother.

The Gemara goes on to record that Yeshu'a ben Panthera "was hanged on the day before the Passover". That is to say, apparently, that after the stoning, ben Panthera's body was hung or exposed on a vertical stake. Crucifixion was an unused mode of execution amongst the Jews, who favoured stoning as the main form of capital punishment. To shorten the cruelty of death by stoning, the victim was first rendered unconscious by a soporific drink, and subsequently the stoned body was exposed on a vertical stake as a warning to others.

The Evidence of the Safed Scroll

The name "ben Stada", given to Jesus in the Talmud, was found to be paralleled in the ancient Mehgheehlla Scroll, which was discovered by Russian physician D. B. de Walthoff near Lake Tiberius in 1882 and is now called simply "the Safed Scroll".

In this old text, there were two brothers called Yeshai and Judas ben Halachmee who were the illegitimate twin sons born of a fifteen-year-old girl called Stadea. The closeness of the name

"Stada" in the Talmud to the "Stadea" in the Safed Scroll is extraordinary, and the slight difference in spelling can be explained by variations in translations. The interesting point here is that the name "ben Halachmee" was the name of Stadea's later husband, not the biological father of her sons. Unfortunately, no mention is made of the real father's name, but ben Halachmee was the name given to Stadea's illegitimate twin boys.

According to the Safed Scroll, Yeshai and his brother Judas ben Halachmee were taken in, raised and

educated by the religious order of Essene monks. The Essenes were a perennial Jewish colony that particularly flourished in Judea for some centuries previous to the time ascribed to the New Testament stories. Subsequently, one of the boys became a student of Rabbi Hillel's school of philosophy and the other became the leader of the Essenes. An older Essene named Joseph was assigned as Yeshai's "religious father" and guardian.

The Safed Scroll suggests that, eventually, Yeshai ben Halachmee's outspoken religious views angered the Jewish priests. He was tried by a Roman court on a charge of inciting the people to rebel against the Roman Government. He was found guilty and sentenced to death, but escaped, left the area and travelled to India.

The Mehgheehlla Scroll mirrors aspects of the hidden story in the Gospels and provides external evidence that the conclusion reached in this volume was known in ancient tradition.

Who was Stada/Stadea?

One of the most popular aspects of etymology is the history of names—those words or phrases which uniquely identify persons, animals, places, concepts or things. The earlier forms of a name are often uncertain, and different dialect pronunciations have led to divergent spellings of the same name. The social pressure to use a standard spelling did not emerge until the 18th century, and earlier writers saw no problem presenting a person's name in a variety of ways. In one study, for example, over 130 variants of

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the name "Mainwaring" were found among the parchments belonging to that family.

Many Hebrew names in the Old Testament are believed to bear a special significance, as individual subjects originally were called by a name expressive of some characteristic, e.g., Edom, red; Esau, hairy; Jacob, supplanter; and Sarai (Sara), from the base word *sharat*. A similar concept applied in Jewish writings and for a long time confused researchers.¹⁸ Like Roman and Hebrew tradition, the names of the characters "often appear in distorted form in Rabbinic literature" and were sometimes an attempt to disguise their true personality.¹⁹ This type of understanding provided the key that enabled researchers to unlock the true essence of what was really being relayed in ancient writings.

"Names research" is an open-ended and complex domain, and one which is particularly greedy of the researcher's time. In any study of the New Testament, however, it must be remembered that

the first Gospels were written in Hebrew,²⁰ and this is a vital point in determining who Stadea really was. "The name [Stadea] has various forms and may have been borrowed from a fanciful name that meant a scholar; or had a regional identity like Stabiae or Statila, or a woman of good family."²¹ According to Jewish writings, Stadea was "the descendent of princes and rulers"²² and her royal heritage provided a clue to her real name. The Talmud further states that Yeshu'a (Jesus) ben Panthera's mother "was also called Miriam, yes, but she was nicknamed Stada...Stat-da, this one has turned away, being unfaithful [Stat-da] to her husband".²³

St Jerome explained the difficulty that he had in translating the earliest Gospels into Latin²⁴ and added that the "original Hebrew" versions of Matthew's Gospel and the earliest Luke Gospels were written in the Chaldaic language but with Hebrew letters. The "original Hebrew" version of the name "Mary" was "Mariamne".²⁵ Therefore, "Mary" in the English-language Gospels of today was originally written "Mariamne" in the Hebrew versions and was sometimes translated as "Miriam".²⁶

Mary Unknown in Early Church History

What was actually recorded of Mary/Mariamne in the only accepted Christian writings provides scant information indeed about the woman the Church now calls "the Mother of God". In the Gospels she is rarely mentioned. In fact, she is not mentioned by name in the oldest version of the Mark Gospel in the oldest Bibles. Nor is she mentioned in the oldest version of the John Gospel. The Church has said that "the reader of the Gospels is at first surprised to find so little about Mary...this obscurity has been studied at length".²⁷ Both the Gospels of Mark and John introduce Jesus as an adult. Only in contrived narratives does Mary play an important role in the biblical texts and, excluding these, she is mentioned only briefly on three occasions.

The church presbyters were also silent on Mary. There was nothing recorded of her, external to the Church, for more than four centuries after the time she was said to have lived. She had no ancestry or background except in spurious apocrypha.

The earliest documented reference to Mary can be found in the Mark Gospel of the Sinai Bible (Mark 3:32). This narrative refers to her as simply the earthly mother of several sons and daughters.

The reference is actually about a group of people who addressed Jesus and said, "Your mother and your brothers and your sisters are outside asking for you". Here is a profound truth. Modern Bibles show the three words "and your sisters" to have been removed or indexed to a footnote. From here onwards, Mary almost vanished from the Church texts and, apart from an obscure final reference to her in the Acts of the Apostles (1:14), she disappeared forever from the New Testament.

However, when the name "Mary" in the Gospels was replaced with the original Hebrew version, "Mariamne", an historic aspect arose. Combining the evidence available, the position advanced in this book is that Mary, the mother of Jesus in the Gospels, Stadea of the Jewish writings, and Mariamne of the House of Herod were one and the same person.

At the time of the development of the Gospels, Mariamne was the younger sister of Herodias and the two girls were an integral part of the vast "family of Herodes" ("Herod" today). They were the much-loved granddaughters of King Herod and he "cared for them with great devotion".²⁸ Their mother, Berenice, later remarried and moved with her teenage daughters to live in Rome, where she gained the friendship of Emperor Augustus.²⁹

Mariamne and Herodias Herod were of noble birth through King Herod (c. 73–74 BC) and his wife, Mariamne I. Mariamne Herod's father was Aristobulus, the son of Herod the Great, and her mother Berenice was the daughter of Herod's sister, Salome. Mariamne also had two brothers named Herod II, King of Chalcis, and Agrippa, who became Agrippa I. King Herod himself was descended from a noble line of kings through his Nabatean mother, Cypros of Petra.

The Nabateans were a Semitic people and the earliest sources regarded them as Arabs. Today they are generally referred to as Nabatean Arabs. Owing to its secure location, Petra was adopted by the Nabatean kings as their capital city, and it became incorporated into the Roman Empire in 106. The Nabatean Arabs

passed out of history with the advent of Islam.³⁰

The House of Herod was founded by the marriage of Cypros of Petra to Antipater (Antipas) the Idumean, to whom Cypros bore four sons, Herod being one. The name "Herod" subsequently became the title of seven rulers mentioned in the New Testament and in Roman history.

King Herod was known to the Romans as "the Great", but in the eyes of the people over whom he ruled he was always known as "the Impious", despite his costly restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem. Herod was a Roman citizen, Governor of Galilee by 47 BC, and then King of Judea from 37 to 4 BC. He was one of the major figures in politics of Palestine in the early years of the Roman Empire. In 7 BC he strangled to death two of his sons, Aristobulus and Alexander, drawing a comment from Roman Emperor Augustus (27 BC–14 AD) that it was safer to be one of Herod's pigs than one of his sons. Another son was later born to Herod and, for his safety, his mother dispatched him to the care of her family in Ariminum, a city near Ravenna in northern Italy.³¹ He was Prince Joseph, the Joseph of Arimathea in the Gospels, and he later became the unseen power behind his father's throne.

The position advanced in this book is that Mary, the mother of Jesus in the Gospels, Stadea of the Jewish writings, and Mariamne of the House of Herod were one and the same person.

Mariamne Herod's ancestors can be traced back on her grandmother's (Mariamne I) side to the Hasmonean "priest-kings" and "hereditary priests" from the tribe of Benjamin. She, her sister and her brothers were descendants of the legitimate Hasmonean dynasty and "carried the Hasmonean blood".³² They also carried the blood of the Nabatean Arabs, so much so that King Aretas IV, who was legally confirmed a Nabatean Arab king by Emperor Augustus,³³ divorced his wife to marry Herodias (who died after AD 41) to maintain the Nabatean bloodline, but she declined him. It was Herodias who was involved in the Gospel story of the beheading of John the Baptist, for which she received a level of notoriety and defamation similar to that of Mary Magdalene.

The available records reflect an intricate tangle of marriages, intermarriages and divorces between the Herods and the Romans. In the account of the Gospel of Mark (6:17), for example, Herodias later married Herod Philip I, her own uncle, by whom she had a daughter, Salome. Salome was named after her Hasmonean ancestor Salome Alexandra, herself a "priestess-queen".³⁴ Later in time, Herod Antipas ("without-land") apparently fell in love with Herodias and proposed to her. Seeing that his fortunes were rising faster than her husband's, Herodias accepted his hand. She longed for social distinction, and accordingly left her husband and initially entered into an adulterous union with Herod Antipas, who was also her uncle.³⁵ She was not married to Antipas at this time, but married him at a much later stage (c. 38).

When Herodias saw how well her brother Agrippa I had fared in Rome, whence he returned a king, she urged her husband Herod Antipas to go to Caesar and obtain the royal title, for she believed his claim to it was far greater than that of her brother. Antipas was not king, but only Tetrarch of Galilee.³⁶ Contrary to his better judgement he went, and soon learned by messengers that Agrippa I had accused him before Emperor Caligula of conspiracy against the Romans. The Emperor banished Herod Antipas to Lyons, Gaul (France), in 41, and although he permitted Herodias to return to her home in Rome she chose to accompany her husband into exile.

It was recorded that the male offspring of the House of Herod were forced to become circumcised Jews in the reign of John Hyrcanus, a Hasmonean of the earlier Maccabean period. In other words, the Herod family adopted the religion of Judaism. The religious movement of the Essenes was also connected to the Hasmonean bloodline through the High Priest Mattathias, the father of the military king Judas Maccabeus.

We know that Herod the Great was favourable towards the Essenes, maybe because they made it their invariable practice to refrain from disobedience to the political authority. The Jewish historical writer Philo recorded that they had never clashed with any ruler of Palestine, however tyrannical, until his lifetime in the mid-first century. This was a passive attitude which could not fail to commend itself to King Herod, and it was reported he even went so far as to exempt the Essenes, like the Pharisees, from the oath of loyalty to himself.

In the reconstruction of the story, and drawing upon the concept of the Safed Scroll, the pregnant Stadea (Mariamne Herod, née Mary) secretly went to one of the Essene communities until the time of the birth, and bore twin boys. Numerous groups of Essenes existed "all over, as they were a very numerous sect"³⁷ and were found in secluded country areas as well as cities. Upon the birth of the twins, she then moved into the palace of Emperor Augustus and there she lived until the boys were old enough to receive schooling. It was due to their solidarity and the family affinity that the young Mariamne Herod had her illegitimate twin boys educated within the Essene community. The Essene hierarchy were her blood relatives and expounded similar principles and traditions to the Herodian philosophy. "They perpetuated their sect by adopting children...above all, the Essenes were the educators of the nobility, their instruction being varied and extensive."³⁸

To avoid confusion in developing the premise provided in this work, Mary, the mother of Jesus in the New Testament, shall be called Mariamne Herod, except when quoting from the Gospels.

Continued next issue...

Endnotes

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13. See notes on both passages (Origen 1:28 and 1:32) by Lommatzech in his *Origen Contra Celsum*, Berlin, 1845.
14. Epiphanius, *Haer (Heresies)*, lxxvii, 7.
15. The Jebamoth, 49A.
16. Michaelis, Jonathon D., *Commentaries on the Law of Moses*, vols I-IV, 1814.
17. Babylonian Shabbath, 104b, repeated in almost identical words in the Babylonian Sanhedrin, 67a.

18. Schwab, Moise, *Translations in Progress* (the Jerusalem Talmud).
19. Mead, G.R.S., *Mary in the Babylonian Talmud*, London and Benares, 1903.
20. St Jerome, 347-420.
21. Eumenides, *The Name of the Furies*.
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24. Hieronymus, *Commentary to Matthew*, book ii, chapter xii, 13.
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26. See Syrian Bible, for example.
27. *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, vol. XV, 1 October 1912, pp. 459-472.
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29. *ibid.*, p. 601.
30. *ibid.*, pp. 740-744.
31. Farrar, Dean, *The Herods*. Also Skeats, *Joseph of Arimathea*, 1933.
32. *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, vol. VI, 1910, pp. 291-292.
33. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 16:355.
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36. The New Testament, however, sometimes called him "king" (Matt. 14:9; Mark 6:14).
37. Doane, T.W., *Bible Myths*, 1882 (reprinted 1949, Charles P. Somerby, Truth Seeker Co.), p. 431.
38. *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, vol. V, 1909, p. 546. Also Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, II, p. 120.

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